

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 19, 2019

Mr. Daniel K. Elwell  
Acting Administrator  
Federal Aviation Administration  
800 Independence Avenue, Southwest  
Washington, DC 20591

Dear Acting Administrator Elwell,

We write to urge the Federal Aviation Administration's (FAA) Drone Advisory Committee (DAC) to include representatives from rural America, including agriculture, forestry, and rangeland stakeholders.

The DAC was established June 15, 2018, under existing U.S. Department of Transportation authority and pursuant to the Federal Advisory Committee Act in order to provide independent advice and recommendations to FAA relating to improving efficiency and safety of Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS).

According to the DAC Charter, "Members must represent a particular interest of employment, education, experience, or affiliation with specific aviation related organization." The FAA's solicitation for DAC members indicated that membership is to be "fairly balanced in terms of points of view represented and the functions performed." Further, the solicitation indicated, "Candidates must be in good public standing and currently serve as a member of their organization's core senior leadership team with the ability to make UAS-related decisions. In rare circumstances, membership will be granted to uniquely qualified individuals who do not meet this latter requirement." The solicitation lists 11 diverse categories represented on the DAC: i) Airports and Airport Communities; ii) Labor (controllers, pilots); iii) Local Government; iv) Navigation, Communication, Surveillance, and Air Traffic Management Capability Providers; v) Research, Development, and Academia; vi) Traditional Manned Aviation Operators vii) UAS Hardware Component Manufacturers; viii) UAS Manufacturers; ix) UAS Operators; and x) UAS Software Application Manufacturers; and xi) Other. The FAA's website clarifies that "[m]embership is comprised of CEO/COO-level executives from a cross-section of stakeholders representing the wide variety of UAS interests, including industry, research and academia, retail, and technology."

On May 8, 2019, the U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation held a hearing on New Entrants in the National Airspace in which Jay Merkle, Executive Director of the FAA's Unmanned Aircraft Systems Integration Office, testified. Mr. Merkle stated, "[I]n the composition of the Drone Advisory Committee, we support having a wide range of users, manufacturers, and operators." However, "it is really up to the Congress and the Secretary how that is composed."

We appreciate the FAA's efforts to assemble a diverse DAC. However, due to the ever-increasing use of UAS in the agriculture, forestry, and rangeland sectors, as well as the inherently different uses for UAS in the less populated parts of our nation, we believe it is important that the DAC include direct representatives from rural parts of America, particularly in the agriculture, forestry, and rangeland sectors of our economy. We, therefore, request that you take steps to ensure broad rural representation on the DAC.

Sincerely,



Gary C. Peters  
United States Senator



Roger F. Wicker  
United States Senator

Cc: The Honorable Elaine Chao  
Secretary of Transportation